

## Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY VALLETTA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO PRIORITY

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VALLETTA FOR ASST. SECRETARY MOOSE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SHUM, PFOR, ET

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT FOR CONGRESS

REF: STATE 22819

1. UNLESS YOU PERCEIVE OBJECTION, PLEASE PASS FOLLOWING TO  
GOVERNMENT PER REFTEL.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN ETHIOPIA, NOT WELL OBSERVED  
BY THE AUTOCRATIC REGIME OF EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE, HAS  
DETERIORATED SINCE THE ASSUMPTION OF POWER BY THE ETHIO-  
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PIAN PROVISIONAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT (EPMG) IN SEPTEMBER  
1974. THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IS DEEPLY AFFECTED BY  
THE POLITICAL REVOLUTION CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS AND BY  
ARMED CONFLICT AGAINST THE SECESSIONIST ERITREANS AS WELL  
AS AGAINST OTHER OPPONENTS, INCLUDING, OGADENI SOMALIS  
SUPPORTED BY SOMALIA.

1. RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON, INCLUDING  
FREEDOM FROM:

A. TORTURE

WE HAVE RECEIVED A FEW ALLEGATIONS OF TORTURE WHICH  
  
APPEAR TO BE VALID.

B. CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR  
PUNISHMENT

THERE HAVE BEEN NO SUBSTANTIATED REPORTS OF CRUEL,  
INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT. HOWEVER,  
UNDER THE PREVAILING WARTIME CONDITIONS EXCESSES OFTEN  
OCCUR, PERPETRATED BOTH BY GOVERNMENT FORCES AND THEIR  
OPPOSITION. IN AN EFFORT TO CHECK ACTIVE OPPOSITION,  
AND PARTICULARLY TO DISARM URBAN TERRORISTS GROUPS,  
THE EPMG HAS ORGANIZED SEVERAL WIDE-RANGING SEARCH AND  
SEIZURE PROGRAMS. ONE SUCH CAMPAIGN BECAME HAPHAZARD  
AND UNSUPERVISED IN MARCH 1977, RESULTING IN NUMEROUS  
DEATHS AND ARRESTS. ANOTHER OCCURRED IN DECEMBER 1977  
WHEN THERE WERE REPORTS OF WIDESPREAD EXECUTIONS AND  
NUMEROUS BODIES WERE FOUND IN THE STREETS AS IF ON  
DISPLAY. THIS RECENT CAMPAIGN, OFFICIALLY LABELLED  
"RED TERROR" BY THE GOVERNMENT, IS CONTINUING IN 1978.  
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C. ARBITRARY ARREST OR IMPRISONMENT

THE USE OF ARBITRARY ARREST AND THE LENGTHY IMPRISON-  
MENT OF OPPONENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN COMMON.  
FOR EXAMPLE, THE WIVES AND CHILDREN OF MANY OF THE 60  
HIGH-RANKING OFFICIALS SUMMARILY EXECUTED IN 1974 BY  
THE REGIME REMAIN IN PRISON.

D. DENIAL OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL

DENIAL OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL IS A COMMON OCCURRENCE  
IN ETHIOPIA.

E. INVASION OF THE HOME

AS PART OF THE GOVERNMENT'S SEARCH AND SEIZURE PRO-  
GRAMS, NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS (KEBELES) WERE ARMED  
AND AUTHORIZED TO CARRY OUT INDISCRIMINATE SEARCHES OF  
HOMES, VEHICLES AND PERSONS IN AN EFFORT TO LOCATE  
WEAPONS AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT LITERATURE.

2. GOVERNMENT POLICIES RELATING TO THE FULFILLMENT  
OF SUCH VITAL NEEDS AS FOOD, SHELTER, HEALTH CARE AND  
EDUCATION

ALTHOUGH THE REVOLUTIONARY TURMOIL HAS IN PART BLOCKED  
REALIZATION OF THIS GOAL, GOVERNMENT POLICY SEEMS GENUINE-  
LY AIMED AT RAISING THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LEVEL OF THE

MASSSES. CENTURIES OF FEUDALISM SEEM TO HAVE BEEN DEALT A  
FATAL BLOW BY EPMG ACTIONS. THE APPROACH OF THE GOVERN-  
MENT, HOWEVER, IS HEAVILY IDEOLOGICAL, AND IT TOLERATES NO  
OPPOSITION TO ITS APPROACH OR METHODS.

THE GOVERNMENT'S LAND REFORM PROGRAM HAS ENDED THE WIDE-  
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SPREAD OWNERSHIP OF LAND BY AN OPPRESSIVE ARISTOCRATIC  
CASTE (THIS WAS FORMERLY MOST STRIKING IN THE AREAS  
INHABITED BY NON-AMHARIC PEOPLE, NOTABLY THE GALLA-PEOPLED  
SOUTHWEST). MORE FOOD IS NOW CONSUMED OR STORED BY THE  
RURAL POPULACE THAN WAS THE CASE UNDER THE EMPEROR. THERE  
APPEARS TO BE CONSIDERABLE SATISFACTION AMONG THE PEASANT  
CLASS, WHICH MAKES UP THE BULK OF THE POPULATION, WITH THE  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL GAINS ACHIEVED TO DATE.

HEALTH CARE AT BEST IS RUDIMENTARY IN ETHIOPIA, BUT ITS  
IMPROVEMENT IS BEING GIVEN TOP PRIORITY BY THE GOVERNMENT.  
THE EPMG IS COOPERATING WITH THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
IN ELIMINATING THE LAST VESTIGES OF SMALLPOX FROM ETHIO-  
PIA; SOMALIA IS THE ONLY OTHER COUNTRY IN THE WORLD WHERE  
SMALLPOX IS STILL REPORTED.

CORRUPTION IN THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT IS NOT WIDESPREAD.

3. RESPECT FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES, INCLUDING:

A. FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, SPEECH, PRESS, RELIGION  
AND ASSEMBLY

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF RELIGION, THESE RIGHTS ARE NON-EXIST-  
ENT IN ETHIOPIA. ETHIOPIA'S LABOR UNION MOVEMENT IS  
SUBSERVIENT TO THE EPMG, WHICH HAS DESTROYED THE RELATIVE  
INDEPENDENCE THE MOVEMENT ONCE ENJOYED.

B. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN THE COUNTRY, FOREIGN TRAVEL  
AND EMIGRATION

TRAVEL ABROAD BY ETHIOPIANS IS STRICTLY CONTROLLED.  
EXCEPT FOR DISRUPTIONS CAUSED BY THE SECURITY SITUA-  
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TION, MOVEMENT WITHIN THE COUNTRY SEEMS SO FAR TO HAVE REMAINED UNAFFECTED BY THE REVOLUTION. EMIGRATION HAS BEEN VIRTUALLY HALTED ALTHOUGH A NUMBER OF EXCEPTIONS ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS HAVE BEEN REPORTED. SOCIAL CONTACTS BETWEEN ETHIOPIAN OFFICIALS AND MANY FOREIGN DIPLOMATS (MOSTLY WESTERN) ARE PROBABLY UNOFFICIALLY DISCOURAGED AND MANY PRIVATE CITIZENS NO LONGER CONSIDER SUCH CONTACTS WISE IN THE PRESENT POLITICAL CLIMATE.

#### C. FREEDOM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

THE EPMG RULES BY DECREE ON THE BASIS OF A ROUGH CONSENSUS PROVIDED BY MILITARY PERSONNEL ELECTED BY MILITARY UNITS. ULTIMATE POWER IS VESTED IN THE PROVISIONAL MILITARY ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL (PMAC) OR DIRG, WHICH MAKES ALL MAJOR DECISIONS. THE PARLIAMENT AND CONSTITUTION HAVE BEEN DISSOLVED AND NO NATIONAL ELECTIONS ARE CONTEMPLATED FOR THE NEAR FUTURE, ALTHOUGH ELECTIONS WITH UNIVERSAL ADULT SUFFRAGE HAVE BEEN HELD IN URBAN AREAS FOR THE KEBELE LEADERSHIP COUNCILS.

OF COURSE, THE ABSENCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES OR ELECTIONS FOR NATIONAL OFFICE SERIOUSLY CIRCUMSCRIBES THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE COUNTRY. NEVERTHELESS, FOR THE MASS OF THE POPULACE OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN RUDIMENTARY POLITICAL ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN WIDENED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. THE FORMATION OF URBAN AND RURAL DWELLERS' ASSOCIATIONS HAVE PROVIDED A VEHICLE FOR THE ETHIOPIAN MASSES TO MAKE A LIMITED CONTRIBUTION TO SOME OF THE POLITICAL DECISIONS THAT HAVE A BEARING ON THEIR LIVES. THE MASSES HAD SCANT INFLUENCE ON SUCH DECISIONS UNDER HAILE SELASSIE.

#### 4. GOVERNMENT ATTITUDES AND RECORD REGARDING INTERNATIONAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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IN THE GOVERNMENT'S VIEW, THE LEVEL OF HUMAN RIGHTS ENJOYED BY THE ETHIOPIAN MASSES HAS IMPROVED MEASURABLY SINCE THE REVOLUTION. THE EPMG POINTS TO ECONOMIC GAINS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE BASIC DECISIONMAKING PROCESS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL AS AREAS IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT DESERVES CREDIT. PROPOSALS FOR INTERNATIONAL OR

NON-GOVERNMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED VIOLATIONS WOULD  
PROBABLY BE REGARDED AS INTERFERENCE IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS.  
THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS HAS BEEN DENIED ACCESS BY THE  
EPMG TO STRIFE-TORN ERITREA. THIS IS THE ONLY SUCH REQUEST  
THAT HAS COME TO OUR ATTENTION.  
VANCE

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## Message Attributes

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